

DOD Strategic Religious Engagement: A Luxury or a Necessity?

by

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Class of 2013

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REPORT DOCUMENTATION PAGE				Form Approved OMB No. 0704-0188	
<p>The public reporting burden for this collection of information is estimated to average 1 hour per response, including the time for reviewing instructions, searching existing data sources, gathering and maintaining the data needed, and completing and reviewing the collection of information. Send comments regarding this burden estimate or any other aspect of this collection of information, including suggestions for reducing the burden, to Department of Defense, Washington Headquarters Services, Directorate for Information Operations and Reports (0704-0188), 1215 Jefferson Davis Highway, Suite 1204, Arlington, VA 22202-4302. Respondents should be aware that notwithstanding any other provision of law, no person shall be subject to any penalty for failing to comply with a collection of information if it does not display a currently valid OMB control number. PLEASE DO NOT RETURN YOUR FORM TO THE ABOVE ADDRESS.</p>					
1. REPORT DATE (DD-MM-YYYY) xx-03-2013		2. REPORT TYPE STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT		3. DATES COVERED (From - To)	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE DOD Strategic Religious Engagement: A Luxury or a Necessity?				5a. CONTRACT NUMBER	
				5b. GRANT NUMBER	
				5c. PROGRAM ELEMENT NUMBER	
6. AUTHOR(S) Lieutenant Colonel Todd W. Ferry United States Marine Corps				5d. PROJECT NUMBER	
				5e. TASK NUMBER	
				5f. WORK UNIT NUMBER	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) Colonel Michael S. Weaver Strategic Studies Institute				8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) U.S. Army War College 122 Forbes Avenue Carlisle, PA 17013				10. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S ACRONYM(S)	
				11. SPONSOR/MONITOR'S REPORT NUMBER(S)	
12. DISTRIBUTION / AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Distribution A: Approved for Public Release. Distribution is Unlimited.					
13. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES Word Count: 10,037					
14. ABSTRACT Recent worldwide events underscore the urgency of formulating U.S. foreign policy that takes account of the motivations of religious actors. The inability of the government to sufficiently integrate credible religious engagement into its diplomatic tool kit will damage its foreign policy efforts and endanger the security of the nation. Strategic religious engagement is not a luxury the U.S. can afford to ignore. Instead, it is a critical, but often neglected, component of U.S. foreign policy that has great potential to shape and deter conflict. The Geographical Combatant Command is one element of national power that is uniquely organized and well-prepared to conduct religious engagement along tense, international religious fault lines. This paper explores how, in a season of declining resources, the U.S. Government can leverage the Combatant Command's diplomatic and informational strengths to build trust, marginalize religious extremism, and keep minor regional friction points from exploding into major issues.					
15. SUBJECT TERMS Religion, Combatant Command, Engagement, Security Cooperation,					
16. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF:			17. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT UU	18. NUMBER OF PAGES 50	19a. NAME OF RESPONSIBLE PERSON
a. REPORT UU	b. ABSTRACT UU	c. THIS PAGE UU			19b. TELEPHONE NUMBER (Include area code)

USAWC STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

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Report Date: March 2013

Page Count: 50

Word Count: 10,037

Key Terms: Religion, Combatant Command, Engagement, Security
Cooperation,

Classification: Unclassified

Recent worldwide events underscore the urgency of formulating U.S. foreign policy that takes account of the motivations of religious actors. The inability of the government to sufficiently integrate credible religious engagement into its diplomatic tool kit will damage its foreign policy efforts and endanger the security of the nation. Strategic religious engagement is not a luxury the U.S. can afford to ignore. Instead, it is a critical, but often neglected, component of U.S. foreign policy that has great potential to shape and deter conflict. The Geographical Combatant Command is one element of national power that is uniquely organized and well-prepared to conduct religious engagement along tense, international religious fault lines. This paper explores how, in a season of declining resources, the U.S. Government can leverage the Combatant Command's diplomatic and informational strengths to build trust, marginalize religious extremism, and keep minor regional friction points from exploding into major issues.

DOD Strategic Religious Engagement: A Luxury or a Necessity?

The reasonable man adapts himself to the world; the unreasonable one persists in trying to adapt the world to himself. Therefore, all progress depends on the unreasonable man.¹

—George Bernard Shaw

Religion Unleashed

On November 4, 1979, radicalized students from throughout the city of Tehran stormed the United States embassy in the heart of the Iranian capital, overwhelming the Marine Security Detachment, seizing the embassy's top foreign-service and CIA officers and completely catching the most powerful nation on earth off guard. Author Mark Bowden vividly captures the 444 day hostage saga in his bestselling book, *Guests of the Ayatollah: The First Battle in America's War with Militant Islam*. In a gripping narrative that takes the reader from the rage-filled city streets of Tehran to the wind-swept sands of the failed Desert One rescue site, Bowden makes a compelling case that Iran's revolution was not simply a localized power struggle in much grander chess match between the United States and the Soviet Union. Instead, it was actually a religiously-fueled revolution that "tapped into a subterranean ocean of Islamic outrage."² The image of over sixty bound and blindfolded Americans left many in the United States feeling helpless and enraged, and simultaneously emboldened the Iranian populace with a new sense of strength and national purpose.³ For many in America, the Islamic uprising was a shocking anomaly that caught the President and the top policy makers by surprise. However, this should not have been the case.⁴ The religiously-driven events in Iran were certainly not un-signaled nor an aberration.

Decades later, it is easier to see how mistakes made in identifying and understanding the intelligence on the cultural dynamics at work in the Middle East led to poor foreign policy decisions. It is particularly clearer now, at this period in the country's history, due to the international environment the United States finds itself in the 21st Century. A detailed look at the 1979 hostage crisis suggests that intelligence analysts supporting the foreign policy decision-makers failed to properly place the political events in Iran in the context of the social and economic changes that were affecting the Middle East. Primarily, intelligence analysts failed to adequately weight the potential impact of the strong Shia religious influence affecting the country.⁵ State Department reports at the time properly noted that the Ayatollah Khomeini had emerged as the most outspoken critic of the government and that the Islamic opponents were in a strong position to overthrow the Shah. However, evidence indicates that the combined biases of the U.S. intelligence community and a majority of foreign policy experts resulted in a catastrophic discounting of the significant role religion would play in the events that unfolded.⁶

One of the world's top scholars on Iran, Dr. James A. Bill, goes further in his analysis of the intelligence mistakes made as events built-up to the Shah's overthrow. In his book, *The Eagle and the Lion: The Tragedy of American-Iranian Relations*, Dr. Bill, explains that "even non-specialists with only a generic interest in the region could hardly ignore the most salient feature of Iran's history: a unique repetition of its clashing Islamic identities punctuated by outbreaks in religious fanaticism."⁷ Given this historic knowledge, U.S. monitoring of Iranian politics should have always included the religious dimension to keep abreast of the attitudes and activities of the more prominent religious

leaders.⁸ Dr. Bill identifies that a significant minority within the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA) struggled against an intellectual bias in the organization's culture, failing in their attempt to highlight the substantial role that religion was playing in fueling the turmoil and unrest building in Iran. Sadly, the organizational hierarchy was afflicted with an intellectual prejudice that summarily dismissed any discussion of religious influence prior to the revolution on the grounds that it was nothing but mere "sociology," a term typically used in intelligence circles to mean the time-wasting study of factors deemed politically irrelevant.⁹

According to Dr. Edward Luttwak, a Senior Advisor at the Center for Strategic and International Studies (CSIS) and one of the country's finest strategic thinkers, had U.S. analysis admitted that the revolt was motivated by an intense religious hatred for the westernization of the Middle East, the disastrous advice given to the Shah might have been different.¹⁰ He also adds that the failure of the CIA to conduct or support a single research proposal relating to the religious dimensions of Iranian politics leading up to the revolution in 1979 was symptomatic of the "distortion caused by defining the struggle solely in terms of conventional western political and economic categories."¹¹ Unbeknownst to the U.S. political leadership at the time, this was only the first of many future encounters with militant religion. For decades this "symptomatic distortion" effectively put blinders on the U.S. intelligence community while systematically shackling U.S. diplomatic efforts.

A Prejudice born of the Enlightenment

In order to effectively conduct foreign policy today, you have to understand the role of God and religion. My [Former Secretary of State, Madeline Albright's] sense is that we don't fully understand, because one, it's pretty complicated, and two, everyone in the U.S. believes in a separation of church and state, so you think, "Well, if we don't believe in the

convergence of church and state, then perhaps we shouldn't worry about the role of religion." I think we do that now at our own peril.¹²

The willingness of U.S. national leadership to quickly dismiss the religiously-motivated ground swell in the Middle East is not surprising. Much academic scholarship since the mid-1990's points to an intellectual blind spot in the intelligence and diplomatic community that is a natural outgrowth of an academic bias that has infiltrated the universities of America and shaped generations of the United States' finest thinkers and leaders. Until recently, a thoroughgoing secular mindset has dominated the study of international relations, viewing religion as an irrelevant and declining force in modern life. Unfortunately, this perspective has had unfavorable results for Western diplomacy.

Dr. Luttwak perceptively points out that the widespread refusal to extend recognition to the entire religious dimension of politics has little to do with one's personal attitudes toward religion. In fact, many who quickly discount the role of religious discourse as a positive shaping tool in international diplomacy actually have deep, personal religious views.¹³ Instead, he suggests that the religious prejudice is a "learned repugnance" to deliberately discount any intellectual acknowledgement of overt manifestations of serious religious sentiment.¹⁴ He is not alone in his observations.

Over the past three decades, a growing body of scholarly work has exposed the root causes of the United States' inability to understand the significance of religion as a central motivator for human action. The seminal book in this area is *Religion, the Missing Dimension of Statecraft*. Edited Dr. Douglas Johnston, the founder of the Washington-based, International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD), this collection of essays explains how an ingrained, secular mindset that views religion as a declining force in contemporary life has dominated modern-day international relations.

Most analysis of this deep-seated bias trace its genesis to the eighteenth century rise of Enlightenment philosophy. Birthed in the minds and writings of the Renaissance, the great thinkers of the Enlightenment systematically desired to reform society using reason alone. Seeking to advance knowledge purely through the scientific method, the enlightenment intellectuals challenged any idea grounded in tradition and faith. This promotion of science, skepticism and secularized scholarly interchange displaced centuries of “superstitious” theological education and transformed intellectual thinking across the Western World. Over time, a mindset of “secular reductionism” or “materialistic determinism” became a driving force in the secularization of public policy in Western Europe and North America. This prejudice grew deeper and deeper until policymakers and academics alike had limited choices available in explaining the motivation for human or institutional behavior.

One of the consistent themes of Dr. Johnston’s work is that, due to the degree to which they separate their spiritual lives from their public lives, Americans now face an immense difficulty in comprehending the depths to which religious and political considerations interact in shaping the perceptions and motivations of individuals from other societies.¹⁵ For the same reason, American do not fully appreciate the possibilities that exist when the parties involved in a conflict can be appealed to on the basis of shared spiritual convictions or values.¹⁶ Washington political theorist Stanton Burnett perceptively generalized the predicament by stating, “American diplomats, raised in the Enlightenment secularism of the Realist school, are unprepared to see spiritual aspects of problems and possible solutions to many of the difficulties with whom they dealt abroad.”¹⁷

Separation not Elimination

Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the Government for a redress of grievances.¹⁸

To fully grasp the deeply-rooted, secular bias ingrained in the practitioners of United States' foreign policy one has to consider the so-called "separation of church and state doctrine" embodied in the Bill of Rights, which in effect can contribute to suppressing consideration of religious factors as explanations for and possible solutions to human conflict. Freedom of religion is a central principle of democracy in the United States, and is enshrined in the First Amendment to the Constitution along with other fundamental rights such as the freedom of speech and the freedom of the press. The Founding Fathers treated religion and religious belief differently from other forms of expression to ensure protection of religious freedom. The origins of the secularism expressed in the First Amendment is primarily a Christian phenomenon that traces back to the struggles between Protestants and Catholics, which devastated Christian Europe in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It was the ferocity of these struggles and the desire to deprive religious institutions of coercive power that finally drove Christian theologians to develop a doctrine of the separation of the church and state.¹⁹ The way this central principle of the United States has developed over the course of the nation's history has created a social stigma that suppresses religious discussion to the extent that there is effectively a prejudice against it in public or political discourse. Unfortunately, this has aided in fostering an intellectual disconnect from much of the world, where religion is a fundamental element in their thinking and political discourse.

Former United States Secretary of State Madeleine Albright eloquently addresses this prejudice in her illuminating book, *The Mighty and the Almighty*. The central theme of her book is that the enlightenment prejudice pervasive in the education system coupled with the suppression of religious discussion in the public forum significantly hinders U.S. diplomatic engagement in a world where religious ideas are taken seriously. Her voice is not alone. There are many practitioner of the art of foreign politics that affirms that our cultural shift away from religion in the public square has left us at a distinct disadvantage when strategically engaging with a majority of the world.

Swiftly Tilting Planet

Religious motivations do not disappear simply because they are not mentioned; more often they lie dormant only to rise up again at the least convenient moment. As our experience in Iran reflected, the United States [Government] has not always understood this well enough.²⁰

One of the hallmarks of the last half of the 20th Century was the independence of numerous people-groups that cast off years of colonial rule. The international order that started to form based of this new liberation was characterized not only by the rise of new economic forces, a crumbling of old empires and the discrediting of communism, but also the resurgence of parochial identities based on ethnic and religious allegiances.²¹ In many places, a strong desire to cultivate an indigenous form of religious politics, free from the taint of Western culture, ended up forming cultural fault-lines.²² As the United States licked its wounds from the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, the unrecognized shadow of a rising enemy began to form in the Middle East and across the globe. In fact, the Iranian hostage crisis' challenge to the supremacy of Western culture and its secular politics, once considered an anomaly, became a major theme in international politics in the 1990s. As religious motivations began to ferment in places

such as Egypt, Mongolia, Algeria, Indonesia, Ukraine, Sri Lanka, India, and Israel, the U.S. diplomatic understanding and effort lagged the changing environment by a wide margin. This led to a dangerous neglect of the reality on the ground.²³ Despite U.S. military engagement in Lebanon and the Soviet Union's own debacle in Afghanistan, the capacity for the United States Government to analyze, influence and engage with militant religious extremists remained at minimal levels. When the Berlin Wall came down in 1989 and the Soviet Union collapsed soon thereafter, the era where military and economic power served as the principle determinants of superpower status ended.²⁴ In the uncertainty that followed, academics and foreign policy experts scrambled to define the features of the "new world disorder."

Arguably the most famous scholar to examine and characterize the era of post-Cold War conflict was the political scientist and author, Dr. Samuel Huntington. In a 1993 *Foreign Affairs* article, Dr. Huntington postulated a theory often referred to as the "Clash of Civilizations." Dr. Huntington suggested that the post-Cold War world was entering a new phase where "nation-states would remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principle conflicts of global politics would occur between nations and groups of different civilizations."²⁵ He further refined his theory in his book *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order*, where he explained that shared cultural and religious identity would eclipse the traditionally recognized drivers of ideology and economics as the fundamental sources of future conflict.²⁶ Dr. Huntington identified eight major "civilizations" that would shape the post-Cold War world: Western, Confucian, Japanese, Islamic, Hindu, Slavic-Orthodox, Latin America and African. He was careful to emphasize that the United States should pay particular attention to the

fault lines between these civilizations. Dr. Huntington perceptively warned that the discordant interactions between “civilizations” would form the battle lines of the future and eventually dominate global politics.²⁷

One can debate whether Huntington’s postulations were an accurate prediction of the post-Cold War landscape, or simply became a self-fulfilling prophecy. Either way, religious motivations, once assumed to be dormant and unimportant and still largely ignored throughout the 1980s and 1990s, exploded into the national consciousness with the attacks on September 11, 2001. Out of religious conviction, Osama Bin Laden directed and 19 hijackers undertook the execution of a low-cost, low-tech, asymmetric attack on the United States. In a prime example of what author Thomas Friedman calls “super-empowered individuals,” this attack demonstrated the ability of such individuals to affect a significant economic and psychological blow to a nation-state.²⁸

Evolving Environment

Since the terror attacks of 9/11, I [Madeline Albright] have come to realize that it may have been I who was stuck in an earlier time. Like many other foreign policy professionals, I have had to adjust the lens through which I view the world, comprehending something that seemed to be a new reality, but that had actually had been evident for some time. The 1990s had been a decade of globalization and spectacular technological gains; the information revolution altered our lifestyle, transformed the workplace, and fostered the development of a whole new vocabulary. There was another driving force at work. Almost everywhere religious movements are thriving.²⁹

In the swiftly evolving and chaotic international environment, the inability of the United States government to sufficiently integrate credible, strategic religious engagement into its diplomatic tool kit will damage its foreign policy efforts and possibly endanger the security of the nation. Almost anywhere one turns, Afghanistan, Kosovo,

Indonesia, Nigeria, Chechnya, Kashmir, Sudan, Sri Lanka, one finds a religious dimension to hostilities.³⁰ According to Dr. Thomas Farr, a former American diplomat and a Senior Fellow at the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs, “the reappearance of public religion on the world state has complex implications. Religion has both bolstered and undermined stable self-government. It has advanced political reform and human rights but also induced irrationality, persecution, extremism and terrorism. Radical Islam may dominate the headlines, but the importance of religion is hardly confined to Muslim majority countries or the Muslim diaspora. An explosion of religion among Chinese citizens increasingly worries communist officials. Religious ideas and actors affect the fate of democracy in Russia, relations between the nuclear power India and Pakistan, and the consolidation of democracy in Latin America. Even in Western Europe which has seen itself as a laboratory for secularizations religion, in the form of Islam and pockets of Christian revival, simply will not go away. The world is flowing with religious communities, theologies, and movements with very public consequences. And there is little reason to believe that this state of affairs will change anytime soon.”³¹

Dr. Farr skillfully breaks down some of the U.S. foreign policy schools of thought and their various approaches to diplomatic religious engagement by stating: “Modern realists see authoritarian regimes as partners in keeping the lid on radical Islam and have nothing to say about religion except to describe it as an instrument of power. Liberal internationalists are generally suspicious of religion's role in public life, viewing religion as antithetical to human rights and too divisive to contribute to democratic stability. Neoconservatives emphasize American exceptionalism and the value of

democracy, but most have paid little serious attention to religious actors or their beliefs."³²

According to Dr. Douglas Johnston, "an inability to see, understand, and make common cause with religious/spiritual forces will involve even higher costs in the future because many imminent conflicts, both international and within states, will have religion as the defining characteristic of at least one of the contending communities."³³ Whether it is the root cause of a conflict, or merely a mobilizing vehicle for nationalist and ethnic passions, religion possesses an unrivaled potential to cause instability at all levels of the global system and the character of these conflicts will be misunderstood if religion is not accurately taken into account.³⁴ The imperative for U.S. diplomacy is to consciously widen its vision to include the influence of religious convictions.³⁵ However, if the secularist habits of thought pervasive within the United States foreign policy community continue to dominate its analysis and engagement to the utter exclusion of considerations of religious influences, the United States will put itself in perilous territory.³⁶

Smart Power

If I [Madeline Albright] were Secretary of State today, I would not seek to mediate disputes on the basis of religious principles any more than I would try to negotiate alone the more intricate details of a trade agreement or a pact on arms control. In each case, I would ask people more expert than I to begin the process of identifying key issues, exploring the possibilities, and suggesting a course of action.³⁷

For decades, one of the greatest threats to the United States survival was the Soviet Union's nuclear capability. Arguably, the most concerning was the threat posed by their Typhoon-class, ballistic missile submarines. As part of the nuclear triad, consisting of strategic bombers, inter-continental ballistic missiles, and submarine-

launched ballistic missiles, these vessels were engineered to stay at sea, virtually undetected, for long periods of time. This capability allowed the submarines a greater chance of survival from a potential first strike and afforded the Soviet's a credible second-strike capacity. Additionally, the ability of these submarines to silently deploy off the coast of the United States, within a very short striking range of strategic targets, only exasperated the tension between the super-powers at the height of the Cold-War. To counter this threat, the United States Navy developed sophisticated shore-based, aircraft-based, and surface-based sensors and weapons to detect and aid in destroying these lurking monsters. However, it was common knowledge in the anti-submarine warfare community that the preferred way to detect and destroy a ballistic submarine was with another submarine. This required the development, construction and deployment of the highly advanced Los Angeles Class attack submarines. The Los Angeles attack submarines did not eliminate the need for all the other ASW platforms. In fact, the United States Navy became extremely adept at using all of their sensor platforms in a highly coordinated effort to track and prosecute Soviet submarines. In a similar manner, the recommendation here is to continue to embrace and integrate all "platforms" of national power when engaging in world-wide diplomatic efforts. With an understanding that normal containment methods, defensive mechanisms, and hard/soft power combinations often used in the rational actor scenario do not often work well in the religious dimension. Much like using an attack sub to counter a ballistic sub, United States diplomacy needs to embrace strategic religious engagement as an essential tool to inform, persuade, influence and shape human terrain with comparable religious thoughts.

The call for an intentional, strategic religious engagement is not a move to shift to soft power alone. It is rather a proposal to set aside years of secular bias and excision of religious considerations from analysis, thought and discourse and integrate a line of effort into the national strategy that applies deliberate religious dialogue as a method of conflict prevention and mediation. In countering religious-based extremist ideologies, the United States should not yield its entire repertoire of both hard and soft power. Traditionally, United States hard power enabled its diplomats to also wield soft power to get what was in the best interest of the country. The military has been the primary source of United States hard power and while they are well suited to defeating traditional states, typically they have been a poor instrument to fight ideas.³⁸ As the recently published, CSIS Commission on Smart Power states, “soft power is the ability to influence and attract people to the United States’ position without coercion and is an essential element in winning the peace and helping others build capable, democratic states. Appealing to others’ values, interests, and cultural references can, in certain circumstances, replace the dependence on carrots and sticks. It is certainly easier to attract people to democracy than to coerce them to be democratic.”³⁹

Ultimately, smart power, which is a skillful combination of both hard and soft power, is the desired combination needed in United States foreign policy. Smart power is term often attributed to Dr. Joseph Nye, a Harvard Professor and political scientist. According to Dr. Nye, smart power “involves weaving both hard and soft power into an integrated strategy, resource base and tool kit to achieve American political objectives. It is an approach that underscores the necessity of a strong military, but also invests heavily in alliances, partnerships, and institutions at all levels to expand American

influence and establish the legitimacy of American action.”⁴⁰ Elements of this approach exist today in United States foreign policy. Unfortunately, they lack an organized rationale, especially those elements that seek to shape and influence along religious lines.⁴¹

A New Mind

I [President Barack Obama] have come here to seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims around the world; one based upon mutual interest and mutual respect; and one based upon the truth that America and Islam are not exclusive, and need not be in competition. Instead, they overlap, and share common principles, principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings. I do so recognizing that change cannot happen overnight.⁴²

On June 9th, 2009, President Obama gave a speech at the Cairo University in Cairo, Egypt. Pledging to “seek a new beginning between the United States and Muslims,” he reached out to the approximately 1.5 billion followers of Islam around the world.⁴³ The speech covered seven major “sources of tension,” ranging from violent extremism, the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan, the Israel-Palestinian conflict, nuclear arms, democracy, freedom of religion, women’s rights and economic opportunity.⁴⁴ This speech acknowledged the great tension between the United States and Islamic nations and attempted to appeal to the shared mutual interest and mutual respect between the “secular” United States and Muslims around the world. Common values that he emphasized were the principles of justice, progress, tolerance and the dignity of all human beings. Quoting from the Quran, the Talmud and the Bible, President Obama said his address was an effort to “speak the truth” about United States relations with the Muslim world.⁴⁵ While President Obama’s Cairo speech may have included the right words as he reached out to the Muslim world in a sincere attempt to convince it that the

United States was changing its approach, overall, their reaction was “great speech, but we will wait to see the actions that follow.”⁴⁶

So, what actions should follow? In order for the United States to sustain its global legitimacy and fully support its policy aims in the next millennium, it is critical that the United States refine its current national strategy to properly address the constructive role of religion in its foreign diplomacy. President Obama’s Cairo speech is a superb diplomatic anchorage from which the United States government can and should launch from to create space for officials to engage pragmatically with religion. To effectively counter the challenges posed by religious extremism, the United States will need to move beyond the rational actor model of decision-making that has long dominated its international relations and develop a new, more-encompassing framework for analysis and action.⁴⁷ In light of the dynamic, globalized world, the U.S. diplomatic efforts will need to be more innovative and take more risks. Sustained, strategic religious engagement is an intentional attempt to remove bias, understand cultural perspective and ultimately influence and shape behavior. For strategic religious engagement to be effective it has to be deliberate and patient. Since the goal is to find common ground, build trust, and drain the swamp of religious extremist behavior, there has to be an appreciation for the time to have effects on a populace. By creating unifying guidance for engagement with religious principles, increasing religion-related knowledge, and integrating intentional, religious engagement at all levels of foreign diplomacy, the United States government can avoid repeating past mistakes and increase its effectiveness in conflict-prone settings.⁴⁸

As difficult as this effort may be it, a strategic concept for synchronizing the government's action and words in this arena is not a novel concept. There are entities within the whole of government that have been attempting to engage in the religious dimension for several years. Unfortunately, the effort has largely been uncoordinated and ignored due to an overt institutional prejudice of interweaving government and religion. In light of religiously-influenced events that range from the 1979 Iranian hostage crisis, to the attacks on 9/11, and to the recent 2012 global eruption over the "Innocence of the Muslim" YouTube video, maintaining a national approach that is void of intentional, strategic religious engagement is irresponsible and dangerous. Developing a capacity for spiritual engagement will not be as easy. There is tremendous inertia within the government establishment to overcome. However, intentional, sustained strategic religious engagement has an opportunity for incredible impact at little cost.

Whole of Government Approach

When I [Madeline Albright] was secretary of state, I had an entire bureau of economic experts I could turn to, and a cadre of experts on nonproliferation and arms control whose mastery of technical jargon earned them a nickname, "the priesthood." With the notable exception of Ambassador Seiple, I did not have a similar expertise available for integrating religious principles into our efforts at diplomacy. Given the nature of today's world, knowledge of this type is essential.⁴⁹

Current United States government activities marginally address the role of religion in conflict and peacemaking. The reality is most of these efforts are often ad hoc and do not represent an integrated strategy. President Obama's "New Beginning" speech signaled an apparent shift in tone from the United States pulpit of the presidency. While his speech did not offer new policy program or Middle East peace initiative, the message woven throughout was one of respect for the Arab and Muslim

world. As groundbreaking as President Obama's speech might have appeared, his words really amplified much of the strategic communications attempted by President Bush's administration. In the wake of the 9/11 and the subsequent "Global War on Terror" the Bush administration sought to provide a pathway for diplomats and other government officials to strategically communicate with the rest of the world. A State Department document titled, "United States National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication" specifically singled out the Muslim world for ongoing engagement. Released in Jun 2007, this strategic guidance resulted from a year-long effort led by Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs, Karen Hughes. It provided a strategic communications plan for diplomats and other government officials and is arguably the first documented national strategy for public diplomacy.

In the communications plan three strategic objects were developed to govern the United States public diplomacy: (1) America must offer a positive vision of hope and opportunity that is rooted in our most basic values; (2) America, with its partners, must seek to isolate and marginalize violent extremists who threaten the freedom and peace sought by civilized people of every nation, culture and faith; and (3) America must work to nurture common interests and values between Americans and peoples of different countries, cultures and faiths across the world.⁵⁰ The strategy identified three main target audiences: (1) key influencers, those who can effectively guide foreign societies in line with United States interests; (2) vulnerable populations, including the youth, women and girls, and minority groups; and (3) mass audiences, who are more connected to information about the United States and the world than ever before through new and expanding global communications media.⁵¹ Unfortunately, due to the

wars in Afghanistan and Iraq, any words that President Bush and the U.S. diplomatic community spoke to the Muslim world often came off as patronizing or phony.

U.S. Government Bureaucratic Reform

Organized religion makes up the largest part of civil society around the world. Nearly 85 percent of people worldwide participate in a faith tradition. We need to engage with religious communities in order to have a holistic understanding of the factors at play in any given country.⁵²

Recent events in Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, and Syria highlight the urgency of formulating U.S. foreign policy that takes account of the motivations of religious actors.⁵³ Currently, five U.S. agencies are responsible for conducting public diplomacy: the Broadcasting Board of Governors (BBG), which oversees all non-military broadcasting; the Department of State (DoS); the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID); the White House (through the National Security Council); and the Department of Defense (DOD).⁵⁴ In reality, most current diplomatic religious engagement is focused on discussing and pushing for religious freedom across the globe. The Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom within the Department of State along with the bipartisan United States Commission on International Religious Freedom and the Special Advisor on International Religious Freedom within the National Security Council were all created by President Clinton to promote worldwide religious freedom, encourage reconciliation in those areas where conflict has arisen along religious lines, and recommend policy to the President, the Secretary of State, and Congress. However, agencies like the DoS and USAID, while fully comfortable discussing and pushing for religious freedom, are often uncertain of what other forms U.S. religious engagement should encompass.⁵⁵

Undoubtedly, there is some growing awareness in the Government that religious engagement is a critical element in employing smart power in trying to achieve U.S. policy aims. However, as important as current government efforts have been, diplomats and other representatives are ill-prepared for engaging religious leaders, institutions, and publics around the globe.⁵⁶ In general, most diplomats receive minimal mandatory training in the necessary religious literacy and competency required to fully navigate their challenging assignments. This lack of education, combined with the aforementioned intellectual prejudice against engaging in religious discourse in the discharge of official duties, means that the nation is sending its officials out into a very religious world without the tools necessary to operate effectively.⁵⁷ The lack of training combined with the confusion about limits and permissions for strategic religious engagement have effectively neutralized the ability of the U.S. officials to advance policy in the often tense, international religious terrain.

If the United States is to earnestly engage the religious dimension of the human realm of then there must be a concerted effort to organize and resource an effort for intentional, strategic religious engagement. A systematic restructuring of its current engagement tools must support a revolutionary new mindset. Suggestions on exactly how to implement this restructuring vary from the radical to the simple and include such items as: reenergizing the Office of International Religious Freedom in the Department of State, assigning Religious Attachés at overseas missions,⁵⁸ establishing a semi-autonomous Bureau of Public Diplomacy within the State Department, and even establishing a Civilization Dialogue Corps to directly engage with the theological and historical al-Qaeda narrative.⁵⁹ While the strategy of giving religious considerations a

higher priority in United States foreign policy may seem reasonable and inexpensive, due to overriding institutional resistance it will be extremely difficult to significantly alter the organizational structure of government to reflect the increasing priority in world affairs. While complete bureaucratic reform may be too far of reach at this point in time, this does not alleviate the dangers inherent in the continued neglect of intentional, strategic religious engagement in United States diplomatic efforts. Although, a plan to restructure and fix the foreign policy efforts of the U.S. government is beyond the scope of this paper, there are numerous voices attempting to do such a thing. Amongst the growing religious political clamor, one institution that is seldom discussed in sustained, strategic religious engagement is the Department of Defense, Geographical Combatant Command (GCC). In fact, this is the one element of national power, with a few deliberate tweaks of its ongoing strategic operations, which can immediately have a significant impact on these tense, international religious fault lines.

We Can't Kill Our Way to Victory

The first, the supreme, the most far reaching act of judgment that the statesman and the commander have to make is to establish the kind of war on which they are embarking; neither taking it for, nor trying to turn it into, something that is alien to its nature. This is the first of all strategic questions and the most comprehensive.⁶⁰

Of all the elements in the national power, the Department of Defense is best poised to immediately integrate religious engagement into its current world-wide strategic planning and shaping efforts. The intent here is not to dissect the roles and responsibilities of the various government departments and examine if DOD should continue to take such a pronounced role in helping to “shape” or “operationalize” U.S. foreign policy.⁶¹ The reality is that contemporary armed conflict includes a pronounced erosion of the boundaries between the military and political domains and given the

economic constraints facing the United States a complete restructuring and substantial resourcing of the Department of State is highly unlikely. Meanwhile, preventing conflict, regional instability and humanitarian disaster is not an inconvenient luxury, but an immediate necessity.⁶² In the current economic environment, with an increased pressure to counter non-state actors and terrorists, the blurred lines between the roles of DOD in shaping operations is of significantly less of importance than actually integrating religious engagement into specific strategic lines of effort that may resolve tensions, save money, and prevent further military commitments.⁶³

Much like the Department of State, the primary responsibility of DOD is to protect and defend U.S. interests at home and abroad. Specifically, the National Command Authority charges each Geographical Combatant Commander (CCDR) with detecting, deterring, and preventing attacks against the United States. In an effort to support the national security strategy, the Department of Defense requires GCCs to develop contingency and crisis action plans to respond to a vast array of security threats. In order to execute its assigned mission, each GCC will ordinarily concentrate on strengthening the defense capabilities of the nations, states, and regional organizations in their assigned theater; conducting military operations in order to deter and defeat trans-national threats; and providing a forward presence to promote regional stability and security. In response to the attacks on 9/11, Congress granted DOD the expanded authority to initiate a number of security assistance and development programs around the world.⁶⁴ A majority of the military assistance programs fall under broad policies intended to “dissuade terrorist from attacking the United States, divert youths from joining terrorist groups, and persuade the leaders of states and nongovernmental

institutions to withhold support for terrorists.”⁶⁵ Given this increased authority to prevent or deter crises from developing, each GCC separately develops Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) plans to integrate diplomatic, information, military and economic sources of national power to prevent crises that may later result in military intervention.

One of the unique capabilities of a GCC is its ability to partner with many types of organizations outside traditional militaries and coalition members. To succeed in its broadly define security mission, each GCC must work closely with other departments and agencies of the U.S. government, such as the DoS, Department of Treasury, the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), the CIA, and USAID. To accomplish this integration, the Geographical Combatant Command staffs, service components, and DOD agencies interact with non-DOD agencies and organizations to ensure mutual understanding of the capabilities, limitations, and consequences of military and non-military actions.⁶⁶ Unlike the most other government agencies, the U.S. military is increasingly more comfortable with engaging in the religious dimension of conflict prevention. Over the last decade, the military has become quite adapt at integrating religious engagement into its humanitarian, counter-insurgency, and stability operations. The military’s successful pattern of engagement in the religious dimension of human conflict was born out of necessity. Since 9/11, DOD has needed to re-learn many past cultural lessons from its numerous worldwide deployments as it has repeatedly found itself operating in religiously dense cultural terrain. From humanitarian missions in Indonesia and Pakistan, to the prolonged peace-keeping and stability operations in Iraq and Afghanistan, the U.S. military has adapted and learned to consciously integrate religious engagement into its operations on the ground. One of the main reasons that

the military has been able to quickly adapt and engage in religious environments comes from the comfort level the organic chaplaincy gives to commanders. Other government organizations simply do not have a similar integrated religious capability.

The Chaplaincy, A Game Changer

In the future, no American ambassador should be assigned to a country where religious feelings are strong unless he or she has a deep understanding of the faiths commonly practiced there. Ambassadors and their representatives, wherever they are assigned, should establish relationships with local religious leaders.⁶⁷

Traditionally, the chaplaincy has been a command-focused specialty within the U.S. military. Their specific tasking within a unit is to provide for the free exercise of religion, accommodate religious needs, to support welfare and morale, and to help the commander understand the complexities of religion with regard to the unit's personnel and mission. In executing these responsibilities, the chaplaincy has given the commanders an ability to successfully engage in the spiritual realm of individual and unit behavior. The powerful religious competency that the chaplains possess is a critical element of the health and mission of each battalion, squadron, ship and base. The chaplaincy gives the commanders the unique and critical ability to influence the unit's spiritual resiliency and esprit-de-corps, even though these areas often lie outside the expertise and comfort zone of most military leadership. This is where the power of the chaplaincy is needed and thrives. The chaplain's ability to bridge the walls of the First Amendment and temper the Church and State divide not only strengthens the military as a whole, but if used wisely, has a distinctive and influential ability to be directed outward in support of military operations. In the increasingly complex environments that the U.S. military has operated in the past decade there has been a pronounced expansion of the chaplain's role to include that of mission-focused

engagement with local religious leaders in conflict zones. In fact, the pragmatic use of chaplains in the prevention, peacekeeping, and reconciliation process has forced the military to include the growth of chaplain responsibilities into its written doctrine.⁶⁸ Given the worldwide explosion of religious tension and conflict, it is prudent that the military embrace this newly-penned doctrine and find creative methods to employ this distinctive and powerful organic capability on a strategic level.

You Can't Surge Trust

Developing a relationship on the battlefield in the midst of a crisis with someone I've [Former Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, Admiral Michael Mullin] never met before can be very challenging. Trust has to be built up over time, you can't surge trust.⁶⁹

As the U.S. military completes its withdrawal from Afghanistan, rebalances its forces toward Asia and monitors the rising cultural tensions in Africa and the Middle East, the “Phase Zero” portion of the GCC Theater Campaign Plan will grow in importance for every Combatant Commander. This “shaping” phase of Joint and Multinational operations concentrates on creating conditions that will dissuade or deter potential adversaries and assure/solidify relationships with friends and allies.⁷⁰ Combatant Commands carefully coordinate the development of their Theater Security Cooperation (TSC) programs with the ambassadors of the countries within their Area of Responsibility (AOR) and integrate the programs into three-year strategic plans.⁷¹ Usually, the Geographical Combatant Commands have great leeway in developing these TSCs, which generally seek to promote stability and develop partnership capacity with foreign military forces by providing training in the basic tactics, techniques and procedures of military operations; equipping soldiers with non-lethal supplies; and providing logistics and communications support for deployed military forces.⁷² However,

most TSC plans have grown to include non-military tasks such as: deploying mobile medical care teams to underdeveloped areas, refurbishing hospitals and schools, and participating in construction projects to include digging wells and irrigation canals.⁷³ The unique ability of the GCC to plan for an entire area of operations, unlike a Department of State country team's singular focus on their individual country, allows the GCC a much broader platform from which to craft smart, integrated engagement.⁷⁴ Conversely, the ambassador's country team's narrow focus is essential to properly shape and contain the military's over-eager desires to run amok and do more harm than good. The need to integrate diplomacy and defense is vital in current armed conflict. If anything the past few decades of war should have highlighted is that it is extremely difficult to try and build relationships, both within the government and with other countries, after a crisis has started.

For the military to support a long-range, strategic view of religious engagement it needs to grow its current methodology. Presently, its religious engagement focuses on integrating the capability into ongoing crisis and stability operations at the operational and tactical levels. To create a broader strategy to shape the AOR, the Geographical Combatant Command needs to craft a bolder engagement plan that tailors an intentional, long-range, religious strategy to match the religious cultural dynamic of its region. Realistically, this does not require a leap into the unknown. With a few minor tweaks to the currently established Theater Security Cooperation plans, each GCC has the tools to begin shaping the religious environment of their respective AORs immediately. As the religious components of conflicts continue to rise in importance and economic realities constrain the U.S. Government, GCC strategic religious engagement can

provide an innovative, low-cost, and small-footprint approach to assist in accomplishing its regional objectives in support of the National Security Strategy.⁷⁵

Integration and Implementation

Few U.S. officials know enough about Islamic law and theology, or about Muslim-world history and culture to debate relevant issues. As a result they are rarely persuasive on questions that shape Arab and Muslim political opinion.⁷⁶

One of the fundamental principles in Phase Zero shaping is the need to build strong relationships that contribute to the mutual desires for regional peace and stability. If the GCC develops a strategic capacity for religious engagement specifically tailored to its Area of Responsibility, there is an increased probability that personal relationships and shared values can reduce some of the tension resulting from the religious fault lines across the globe. For years, members of the defense and diplomacy communities understood that the cross-cultural training of leaders naturally enhanced relations between the U.S. and foreign countries. This principle is the reason that the Department of Defense invests heavily in Foreign Area Officers (FAO) and the Department of State exerts effort in sponsoring foreign exchange programs. In introducing strategic religious engagement into the GCC's Theater Campaign Plan it is essential that diplomacy and defense mutually support each other in order to forge strong international partnerships and meet the shared regional security challenges. At this time, the GCC is well prepared to embark on religious engagement: it has the relationships with the embassies, militaries, and other external agencies; it is very familiar with the specific cultural dynamics of the region; it has created Theater Security Cooperation plans that call for repetitive engagement to shape the regional landscape; it has unique capability with the organic chaplaincy to build trust across religious lines;

and ultimately it is charged with conducting operations to defending the homeland. With this in mind, in order to properly integrate strategic religious engagement into the Geographical Commander's TSC plan the following five steps provide a roadmap for consideration.

Step 1: Train the Staff. Before embarking on an intentional campaign to integrate strategic religious engagement into a Theater Campaign plan it is imperative that the GCC staff understand the value religious leadership can add in the shaping the cultural environment of a tense region. A review of recent War College research highlights why staff training is the place to start. In the last decade there have been several research papers published that identify religion as an important, but often neglected element of diplomatic and military operations. Not surprisingly, it is almost exclusively military chaplains who write these papers and of those, few suggest implementing intentional religious engagement at the strategic level to shape and prevent conflict.⁷⁷ Instead, much of the writing addresses the use of chaplains in both historical and recent operations and recommends improved methods to integrate them at the tactical level of ongoing crisis and stability operations. The disconnect between the operational planners and the chaplaincy needs to be addressed prior to evaluating the regional religious cultural terrain and formulating a strategic approach to implementing religious engagement. It is equally important that all the staff planners responsible for formulating a strategic Theater Campaign Plan are introduced to the diverse, non-governmental organizations whose efforts in religious diplomacy currently support DOD in analyzing and developing strategies to understand and influence the intersection of religion and world affairs. While there are many institutions whose focus

is peaceful resolution of worldwide conflict, the four organizations highlighted here: the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD);⁷⁸ the Berkley Center for Religion, Peace and World Affairs;⁷⁹ the Institute for Global Engagement (IGE),⁸⁰ and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life,⁸¹ are not only positively engaging the world through the lens and voice of religious expression, but they have already partnered with DOD and DoS in varying capacities.

One great example of staff education is AFRICOM's recent use of the Pew Forum to instruct the staff on the religious dynamics of their AOR. In 2010 the command invited Dr. Alan Cooperman, Associate Director of Research for the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, to travel to Stuttgart, Germany and brief the members of the staff on how attitudes on religion, politics, and culture impact engagements in Africa.⁸² Dr. Cooperman shared the findings of the Pew Forum's study entitled, "The Global Religious Landscape, A Report on the Size and Distribution of the World's Major Religious Groups as of 2010." This 19-country survey in Sub-Sahara Africa provided a perfect example of using established experts in the field of religious analysis and diplomacy to enlighten a planning group charged with creating Theater Campaign Plans.⁸³ As the GCCs grapple with integrating the religious dimension into its sphere of influence, it is important to leverage those organizations outside the government that are focused on the positive aspects of religion as a bridge-builder in conflict resolution to aid in the training and education of the staffs seeking to shape and influence regional AORs.

Step 2. Map the Cultural Terrain

Religious engagement is primarily an intelligence battle and any future success will hinge on the ability of creating specially crafted engagement teams to coordinate and partner with key religious leadership in the affected countries.⁸⁴ Each Geographical Combatant Command already does intense analysis of the cultural variables in each AOR however, in light of the well-documented secular prejudice, there needs to be renewed emphasis on the effect religious factors play in the culture. A proper intelligence strategy will specifically target “key influencers” whose views can have a ripple effect throughout society.⁸⁵ In particular, the requirement is to carefully identify the passionate voices in the AOR that incite populations to violence and elicit support the religious personalities that condemn extremist behavior.⁸⁶

At each Combatant Command a Joint Force Chaplain (JFCH) serves as the principle advisor to the commander on religious affairs. The JFCH's responsibilities include: advising the CCDR on religious matters affecting the AOR; engaging with senior military leadership and national religious officials as directed and consistent with a noncombatant status; advising partner nation chaplains; preparing appropriate portions of theater plans, orders, and directives; and developing and recommending strategic command policy regarding religious issues.⁸⁷ It is imperative that each JFCH is personally involved in the integration of religious engagement in theater plans. Unfortunately, even though DOD repeatedly sends senior chaplains to Senior Service Colleges, seldom are they used as planners in GCCs crafting of strategic plans. This is primarily due to inability of the chaplaincy to break from their traditional command-focused, spiritual role. As the chaplaincy is challenged to grow into an integrated,

strategic thinker and planner, the relationships of trust that they establish and develop by networking with local religious leaders, non-governmental organizations (NGO), private voluntary organizations, international organizations, and the interagency community will contribute significantly to the enhanced situational awareness of the cultural terrain of an AOR and aid in developing strategies to deter conflict.

Step 3: Form the Engagement Strategy:

Once the GCC ascertains the influential religious actors in a region, the next step is to determine what it considers as acceptable behavior and identify the available methods of persuasion to engage, inform, and influence those whose views can have a positive or negative ripple effect throughout society. The noted weakness of religious engagement across the whole of government is that while the U.S. has made great strides in developing sophisticated engagement strategies for religious actors, the missing ingredient is a systematic and regular forum for consultation with interfaith groups and religious leaders.⁸⁸ With this in mind, any strategic religious engagement plan will be a combination of gaining situational awareness, strategic communications, and repetitive face-to-face meetings. According to Joint Doctrine, “strategic communication” refers to focused efforts to understand and engage key audiences to create, strengthen, or preserve conditions favorable for the advancement of U.S. interests, policies, and objectives.⁸⁹ DOD strategic communications is a nested process within the U.S. government and it is a critical component of informing and influencing behavior in support of the “shape and deter” mission of a Geographical Combatant Commander.

One great example of blending religious strategic communications and repetitive engagement is European Command's International Military Chiefs of Chaplains Conference held annually in Stuttgart, Germany. Since 1990, this conference has provided a forum to foster coordination and build on existing relationships with traditional allies and develop capacities with other partner nations.⁹⁰ The goal of this activity is to alleviate mistrust, rumor, and stereo-types, and build influential partners that can serve as voices for good governance, human rights, justice, and religious freedom.⁹¹ One strategic approach to GCC religious engagement would be to simply duplicate this conference of chaplains according to GCC regions. This would serve as bridge-building opportunity to identify lines of mutual religious commonality between established partnership countries. Once the vision of the conferences catches, the next step would be to take the conferences down into the individual countries and grow the ecumenical spiritual connections between different tribal and religious groups, all of which play a role in supporting and enhancing regional stability and security. In order to create synergy, repetitive spiritual engagement should synchronize with the ongoing TSC regional exercises already in place. Once in country, conferences led by trained Religious Engagement Teams (RET) would host dialog with moral and religious leaders such as clerics, imams, rabbis, monks, and priests in order to remove bias, understand cultural perspectives, and influence behavior in an effort to support U.S. national objectives in the region. Finally, in crafting a regional strategy, there needs to be an appreciation for the time necessary to have effects on a populace. Trying to change minds in the world-wide struggle for strategic influence takes patience.

Step 4: Build the Capability:

To execute repetitive, strategic religious engagement, each GCC needs to build the capability to deploy Religious Engagement Teams. These teams would be comprised of senior chaplains trained in the dynamics of religious diplomacy and assembled by each Combatant Command according to the regional religious dynamics of their AOR. There are several creative ways to this. One approach is to develop a cadre of trained senior chaplains that can deploy in support of regional engagement conferences and exercises. These can either be resident within the GCC and/or the regional service components or developed as teams based in the U.S. and capable of deploying in support of regional partnership for peace exercises. Another way is to develop the capability within the National Guard State Partnership Program (SPP) and deploy them in conjunction with the established SPP engagement activities. Any way the individual GCCs decide to operationalize this program, a key element will be building relationships through repetitive engagement. This necessity would force GCCs to factor personnel stability into the RET's character to capitalize on the relationship building necessary to foster trust and change perceptions over time.

While the members of a GCC Religious Engagement Team can come from any service, they should all go through a Religious Diplomacy Development course specifically designed for the graduate-level, Senior Staff College student. Again, this is not a radical departure from what already occurs. Since 9/11 all the services embarked on various programs of integrating training in religious peacekeeping into their introductory chaplain schools. While this effort should be applauded, this initial training is not adequate for the development of RETs at the Combatant Command level of

strategic engagement. Following initial school training, a typical chaplain will spend their first 10 or more years focused on the spiritual care feeding of their assigned unit. In rare instances, they will use that initial peacekeeping training in tactical and operational level peace and stability operations. The initial training they received in basic chaplain school will need to be refreshed at a later date and specifically tailored to the particular Geographical Combatant Command's strategic RET mission.

In developing RET personnel, each Combatant Command will want to select senior chaplains and capitalize on their years of religious and military experience. With the recently-established Armed Forces Chaplaincy Center (AFCC), the ability to craft a common, graduate-level, short-course in strategic religious diplomacy is fairly simple. The AFCC can easily develop the curriculum by partnering with the likes of the ICRD, IGE, the Berkley Center and the Pew Forum. As stated before, each of these organizations have experience in partnering with DOD and DoS in religious diplomacy. In fact, IGE and ICRD assisted in developing the initial peacekeeping and diplomacy curriculum with the chaplain schools of the Navy, Air Force, and Army. Likewise, the Pew Forum and Berkley Center have persistently worked with Combatant Commands in various type of religious education.

Step 5: Execute, Evaluate, Repeat

Once the GCCs initiate their strategic religious engagement program there will be a requirement to develop feedback and growth mechanisms. As regional situations change, the intelligence coming from the program will shape the message, the characteristics of those representing the GCC, and the battle rhythm of engagements. Similarly, the relationships of the RETs to the Department of State and various

interagency country teams will enable to programs to grow and adapt to the specific environments. Each GCC will need to be flexible enough to adjust the engagement parameters to have the greatest results and patient enough to allow the desired effects to take root. Finally, with the knowledge gained by integrating sustained religious engagement there will naturally be an increased desire to dedicate academic thought to the programs. Again, partnering with the outside agencies, to include the Senior Service Colleges, will allow the GCCs to draw some of the top academic minds in the U.S. toward the mutual desire to reduce conflict through relationships built upon religious diplomatic dialogue.

Luxury or Necessity:

No single speech can eradicate years of mistrust, nor can I [President Barack Obama] answer in the time that I have all the complex questions that brought us to this point. But I am convinced that in order to move forward, we must say openly to each other the things we hold in our hearts and that too often are said only behind closed doors. There must be a sustained effort to listen to each other; to learn from each other; to respect one another; and to seek common ground.⁹²

In a season of declining resources, the U.S. Government will soon begin to take a substantial risk in its military and economic elements of power, hoping that a bolstering of its diplomatic and informational elements will suffice in countering threats to the security of the nation. Evidence clearly indicates that the world is not growing more stable and religious beliefs as an element of worldwide, cultural conflict are increasing. At the same time, there is a rising appreciation for the powerful opportunities religious engagement can provide in supplementing other elements of national power. It is the premise of this paper that strategic religious engagement is not a luxury the U.S. can afford to ignore. Instead, it is a critical, but often neglected,

component of U.S. foreign policy that, if properly integrated into strategic lines of effort, has great potential to shape and deter conflict.

If the ultimate mission of the military is to prevent war, then when the United States sends its men and women forward into combat, the military in many respects has failed. Strategic religious engagement is not a sideshow to hard power, or a simple, diplomatic “nice to have.” Influence requires legitimacy and it reflects the ability of forces to operate successfully among the people of the host nation, interacting with them consistently and positively while accomplishing the mission.⁹³ Strategic religious engagement aims to establish legitimacy and effect behavioral change through the appeal of a shared, common system of beliefs. If religious engagement has the potential to produce a vastly superior output to the minimal required input, the question is now how best to integrate it as strategic line of effort. The hesitancy of most military strategists would be to shy away from formally adopting any religious engagement in GCC Phase Zero operations, not because they think it is unimportant, but because they are generally uncomfortable in dealing with religion due to systemic fear and personal bias. If the last decade of humanitarian and combat operations has taught the U.S. military anything is that it has a proven capability to pragmatically integrate religious engagement into a full spectrum of operations. In order to build trust, marginalize worldwide religious extremism, and keep minor friction points from exploding into major issues, it is time that the Geographical Combatant Commands systematically integrate religious engagement into their Theater Strategy Plans. As much as engagement costs, it is far less than operations in Phase Three and Four. As Sun Tzu describes the

supreme art of war, “For to win one hundred victories in one hundred battles is not the acme of skill. To subdue the enemy without fighting is the acme of skill.”⁹⁴

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⁷⁷ Three Army War College Research Papers that identify a need for strategic religious engagement are: Chaplain (LTC) Thomas Soljem's "Integrating the Religious Dimension into U.S. Military Strategy," Chaplain (COL) Kenneth Duvall's, "The Strategic Use of Chaplain Liaison in a Policy Projection Platform to Resolve Conflict and Promote Peace," and Chaplain (LTC) Ira Houck III "Strategic Religious Engagement for Peacebuilding." In these, Chaplain Soljem argued that the proper place for integrating strategic religious engagement is the Special Operations Command (USSOCOM), Chaplain Duvall pushed for chaplains to serve as Combatant Command Religious Leader Liaisons (RLL) in support of humanitarian and civic assistance missions, and Chaplain Houck suggested that the military needs to broaden its use of chaplains to include strategic conflict resolution and peace-building.

⁷⁸ Founded in 1999 by Dr. Douglas Johnston, the International Center for Religion and Diplomacy (ICRD) is a Washington-based, non-governmental organization (NGO) whose mission is to "prevent and resolve identity-based conflicts that exceed the reach of traditional diplomacy by incorporating religion as part of the solution." Two pertinent examples of the way the ICRD is partnering with the U.S. government in strategic religious engagement is through engagement and education. For the past several years, the ICRD has been involved in working with the State Department on faith-based conflict resolution in Pakistan with leaders from over 1,600 madrasas and religious schools. In 2001, the ICRD partnered with the Navy and Coast Guard to develop faith-based diplomacy training for their introductory chaplain schools. This effort has now expanded into the training curriculum of the other military services in order to train chaplains in religion and statecraft. In addition, ICRD has conducted major conferences on understanding Islam for the U.S. Air Force.

⁷⁹ Georgetown University opened The Berkley Center for Religion, Peace, and World Affairs in 2006 with an explicit intent to focus on the interdisciplinary study of religion, ethics, and public life. Through research, teaching, and service, the Center explores global challenges of democracy and human rights; economic and social development; international diplomacy; and interreligious understanding. The Berkley Center serves as co-host with National Defense University programming for an annual conference of the senior US Combatant Command chaplains, sponsored by the office of the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff.

⁸⁰ The Institute for Global Engagement (IGE) is a self-described “think and do tank” that focuses on promoting a “sustainable environment for religious freedom worldwide.” Chris Seiple, a former U.S. Marine, founded the institute in 2000 after serving as the U.S. State Department’s first Ambassador at Large for International Religious Freedom. Building on his time at the State Department, Dr. Seiple saw a direct linkage to the restriction of religious freedoms in a nation-state and its susceptibility to internal and external conflict. The IGE encourages governments to protect religious freedom, and it equips citizens to exercise that freedom responsibly. At the request of the U.S. Army chaplaincy, IGE designed and implemented the chaplaincy’s first training program for social-cultural-religious strategy and engagement (2010-2012).

⁸¹ Launched in 2001, this branch of the Pew Research Center seeks to promote a deeper understanding of issues at the intersection of religion and public affairs. The Pew Forum conducts surveys, demographic analyses and other social science research on important aspects of religion and public life in the U.S. and around the world. The Pew Forum explores the role religion plays in world affairs through a range of research products. The Pew Forum also produces research that documents the extent of government and social restrictions on religion around the world.

⁸² US AFRICOM Public Affairs, “TRANSCRIPT: Cooperman on Religion and Politics in Africa,” June 15, 2010, <http://www.africom.mil/Newsroom/Transcript/7520/transcript-cooperman-on-religion-and-politics-in-a> (accessed October 8, 2012).

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⁸⁴ Johnston, *Religion, Terror, and Error: U.S Foreign Policy and the Challenge of Spiritual Engagement*, 71.

⁸⁵ Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC), *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, 4.

⁸⁶ Strategic Communication and Public Diplomacy Policy Coordinating Committee (PCC), *U.S. National Strategy for Public Diplomacy and Strategic Communication*, 4.

⁸⁷ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Religious Affairs in Joint Operations*, Joint Publication 1-05 , xii.

⁸⁸ CSIS Office of the Chief of Staff Strategy Report, “Nigeria: A Case Study of U.S. Government Engagement with Religion,” December 18, 2006, http://csis.org/files/media/csis/pubs/061218_sr_v2n16.pdf (accessed October 8, 2012).

⁸⁹ U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, *Information Operations*, Joint Publication 3-13 (Washington, DC: U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff, November 27, 2012), II-5.

⁹⁰ United States European Command, "International Chief of Chaplains Conference," linked from the United States European Command Home Page at Key Activities, <http://www.eucom.mil/key-activities/partnership-programs/ICCC> (accessed October 8, 2012).

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⁹⁴ Sun Tzu, *The Art of War*, trans. Samuel B. Griffith (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1963), 77.